

It is not practicable here to discuss the causes of these fluctuations or to recommend measures for the protection of declining species. This must be left for the final report.¹ It ought to be possible for this association to make its influence felt toward securing such uniform legislation in different States as may be used to check the slaughter of waterfowl and shore birds, which otherwise must result in the extirpation of several species.

WILLIAM SWAINSON TO JOHN JAMES AUDUBON.

(A hitherto unpublished letter.)

BY RUTHVEN DEANE.

IN Dr. Elliott Coues's memorable address delivered at the Fifteenth Congress of the American Ornithologists' Union, entitled 'Auduboniana and other Matters of Present Interest,'² he called attention to the fact that the man whom Audubon finally selected to write the technical part of his 'Ornithological Biography' and 'Synopsis' was William MacGillivray. He also stated how fortunate it was that he had not fallen into the clutches of William Swainson as a collaborator in that great work, for in 1830 there were negotiations to that end. In 'The Auk' for 1898 Dr. Coues published a letter of Swainson to Audubon³ dated 2nd Oct. 1830, showing conclusively that further attempts to engage in a co-editorship were terminated.

I have before me another letter of Swainson to Audubon, and while it bears no date, there is a memorandum at the end, in Audu-

¹ The Decrease of Certain Birds and its Causes, with Suggestions for Bird Protection. Annual Report of Mass. State Board of Agriculture for 1904. In preparation.

² Bird Lore, Vol. III, 1901, p. 9.

³ William Swainson to John James Audubon (a hitherto unpublished letter). Auk, Vol. XV, 1898, pp. 11-13.

bon's handwriting, "Answered 29th Aug. 1830, J. J. A."; so it is fair to presume it was received shortly before that date. This letter was written while negotiations were still in progress, and a short time prior to the letter published by Dr. Coues, and shows that self-importance which characterizes some of his other unpublished letters.

I am under obligations to Miss M. Eliza Audubon, who has kindly allowed me to copy and publish this letter, for an exact transcript of the original.

"Thursday

"*My dear Mr. Audubon.*

"I received your letter yesterday, and hasten to reply to it. By some mistake or other, of Havell's, he has not sent the birds to which you allude, and I did not of course know that you had left them with him, now to your two propositions.

"First, as to boarding with us, you do not know, probably, that this is never done in England, except as a matter of necessity or profession, in which case the domestic establishment is framed accordingly. But this consideration would have no influence with me, in *your* case did other circumstances allow of it. It would however be attended with so many changes in our every-day domestic arrangements, that it becomes impossible.

"Secondly, as to the proposition I once made you, I am fearful you have put it out of my power to do *so much* as I *might* have done, from your having distributed the very birds which would have been the materials I was to work upon; and upon which only, any scientific observations truly original, (& therefore *worth* putting into your book), must be founded. Fortunately, however, my own collection is not poor in North American Specimens, and these would still furnish a mass of interesting information *to the Scientific*. It would be, however, highly advisable that all these species which I have not, but which you have brought home, and given away, should be borrowed back again, without delay.

"Next as to plan. I have always told you that the plan you mention, so far as your own narrative goes, is the *very best* which could possibly be chosen. *You* have to speak of the birds as they are alive, *I* to speak of their outward form, structure, and their

place in the great System of their Creator, for the true system, if I have, or anybody else, has discovered is not a *Human System*. If my views are correct, every observation you make, *plain, unvarnished*, and strictly *accurate*, will fully and perfectly harmonize. Our parts are totally distinct, and we have no occasion to consult with each other what we should say at every page. Where our views may differ, I shall not, of course, say anything. My own remarks had better be kept distinct, in the form of "Scientific Notes" to each letter, at the end, and in this way you will make the work, the *standard authority* on American Ornithology, which without Science, it certainly would not be, however interesting or valuable in other respects.

"As to time, and remuneration, I shall have completed all my portion of Dr. Richardson's¹ works in two months. I can then *devote* a portion of each day to yours. The terms of my remuneration will be those which I always receive from the Booksellers, and which are fixed, worth twelve guineas a sheet of the same size and Type as the *Zoological Journal*, each sheet being 16 pages, and each page averages 390 words, the calculation is there brought to a nicety, and you may spend as much as you choose. If I have to revise and correct the proofs, make alterations etc. that will be something additional, I always charge this by the *time* each sheet takes me, and would come to from 5/ to 7/6 a sheet but the booksellers generally give me a round sum, which I name after trying the three first sheets of a work, with Dr. Richardson's the case was different, I there had 300£ for my assistance and drawings. It would of course be understood that my name stands in the title page as responsible for such portion as concerns me.

"Should we arrange this matter, it will be time enough to fix on other minor points. But I should like to know your decision soon, as I have been applied to in another quarter. Indeed I am already so full of business, that I have two years active employment before me. I go for two days to assist Burchell² in the arrangement of

¹ As co-author of Swainson and Richardson's *Fauna Boreali-Americana*. Part II. The Birds. Born Nov. 5, 1787—died June 5, 1865.

² William John Burchell, explorer and naturalist, who collected extensively in Brazil, Africa, and other countries. Born 1782?—died March 3, 1863.

his African Birds prior to publication, the end of the month, I shall bear in mind what you say on the Woodpecker but I have peculiar notions on *Species*, which, as I believe them correct, so I do not suffer to be influenced by the opinion of others, you will see more of this in my Book of American Birds. Our kindest remembrance to Mrs. Audubon, and always look upon me as your sincere, but very plain spoken friend.

W. SWAINSON.

"P.S. I had a long letter from Chas. Bonaparte¹ the other day, Vigers² is gone to Rome!!

"J. J. Audubon
c/o Mr. Thomas Fowler, Bookseller,
Manchester."

"Answered 29th Aug. 1830. J. J. A."

PLUMAGE WEAR IN ITS RELATION TO PALLID SUBSPECIES.³

BY JONATHAN DWIGHT, JR., M. D.

A MORE progressive generation of ornithologists will no doubt possess itself of higher standards for estimating the value of subspecies. At present the standards are shifting, dependent too much upon individual opinion and often entirely inadequate, even in the hands of trained observers. Under these circumstances it is not surprising that geographical races are viewed with disfavor by many who realize their shortcomings. The millennium has not arrived when the worn and faded breeding bird will be discarded as an unreliable basis for subspecies, and many of our races rest

¹ Charles Lucian Bonaparte. Born 1803—died 1857.

² Nicholas Aylward Vigors. Born 1787—died 1840. Naturalist. First Secretary of the Zoölogical Society of London.

³ Read at the Twenty-second Congress of the American Ornithologists' Union, Cambridge, Mass., November 29, 1904.